PUBLIC RELATIONS

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Salary Survey

Where do you fit in?

PUBLIC RELATIONS JOURNAL

June 1989 Vol. 45 No. 6

FEATURES

17 ***PRJ*'s Fourth Annual Salary Survey: median salary at $39,400; gender gap still lives**

What's the median salary for your age, experience, sex? What are practitioners in firms, industrial manufacturing, utilities, health care, financial, government and other types of organizations earning? How well do the specialties pay—investor relations, public affairs, marketing, employee relations, corporate communications, issues management, *et al?* Find out in our just completed annual survey of *PRJ* readers. *Nicholas J. Tortorello and Keith Barnes*

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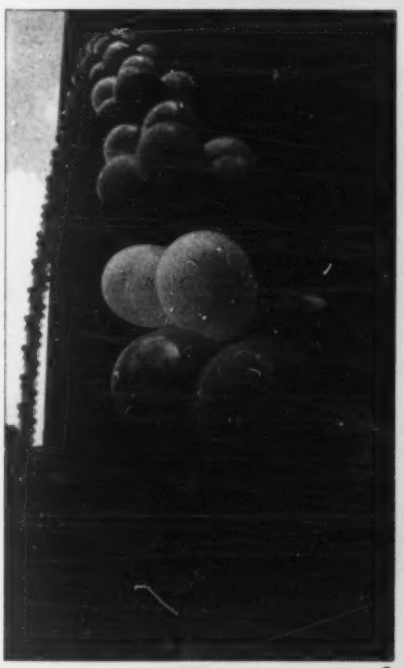

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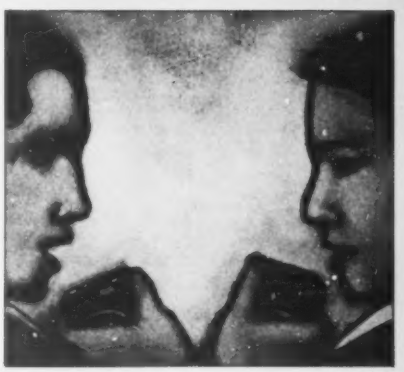

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Jay Brousseau/Image Bank

Cashing in

In this field or any other, salary surveys are among the most anticipated and closely read type of feature. It's human nature to want to know what other people are earning (particularly those in the same position), and it's helpful both for management reference and individual career-planning purposes to have such information. Therefore, although I have no hard data to back this up, I'd wager that salary surveys are easily among the most torn-out and dog-eared types of features, as well.

Such surveys can also serve to give the field as a whole one type of periodic touch point on its status and progress. However, in looking at results of any survey, it's important to put the numbers in context. Ours is not a random survey—it is self-selecting, based on responses from our readers to a questionnaire inserted in our March issue. This means that there is no way to statistically determine exactly how reflective it may be of the overall field or of a given break-out.

We had a healthy-sized sample (1,284 responses, representing a response rate of about 6 percent). And, the sample seems to be fairly reflective of the field's breakdown, at least by sex (54 percent of respondents are female). Although our median respondent age (between 37 and 38) seems somewhat lower than those of other recent industry salary surveys conducted by mail, the trends indicated are much the same: slow growth in overall median salaries and continuing gaps between the salaries of men and women at nearly every level of experience, age and title.

Still, it's best to remember before pulling out this survey as ammunition for your next review that it is indicative of basic trends within this sample, not a precise indicator of what your salary should be.

The area of crisis management is receiving more and more attention, for all-too-obvious reasons. The news media are filled with reports of crises ranging from environmental accidents, to food and drug tampering, to concerns about pesticides and preservatives, to terrorist attacks. All organizations, no matter how conscientious, must ask themselves not *if*, but *how* they may be affected by one or more frustratingly numerous and increasingly random crisis scenarios. No one likes to think about such eventualities, but a growing number of organizational leaders are realizing that facing the hard realities and planning for the worst is indeed the best way to avoid crises that can be avoided and minimize the damage of those that cannot.

Consequently, staff and firm counselors specializing in crisis management are becoming the not-so-unsung heroes at the center of a growing number of events. Some don't get their names in the papers. In many cases, they've done their jobs so well that a potentially serious crisis has been averted or so dissipated that it receives little media attention; in others, their best strategy is to work behind the scenes, counseling the top executive who's been designated as official spokesperson. Each time that these practitioners *do* turn up in the press as the experts who took well-reasoned action—and perhaps saved the day—the whole field of public relations gets a shot in the arm.

Either way, you can bet that talented crisis managers are stars as far as their managements and clients are concerned. And that may well be even more image-enhancing for the profession than public recognition.

All this is in the way of introducing our new, quarterly column on crisis management (*page 40*). We think it's going to be an exciting addition to the magazine, and we invite you to share case studies—particularly ones that may help others master a specific area of crisis management expertise or plan for a similar crisis.

—Karlene Lukovitz, Editor

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BRIEFINGS

Summary annual report insert in *WSJ* "gets the word out"

AMAX Inc. may be first company to use this dramatic format to attract investors

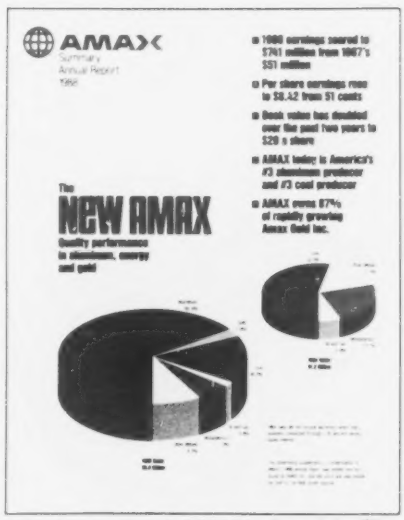
AMAX Inc. believes it's found a way to boost the communications impact of the now much-employed summary annual report. The company recently published a version of its report as a special section in *The Wall Street Journal* in an effort to extend its message beyond stockholders and employees, to the business/financial community at large.

On Thursday, April 13, AMAX published its summary annual report in the fourth section of the *WSJ*, reaching some five million readers. "We wanted to reach people whom we wouldn't reach through normal communication channels," explains Mitchell Badler, the company's director of corporate communications. "There are a lot of financial institutions, like banks and trusts, that only have a general idea, if any at all, of what AMAX is. We wanted to reach out to that audience and get them interested."

WSJ: It's a first

AMAX, the nation's third largest producer of aluminum and coal, spent $500,000 to publish its first-ever summary annual report, printed in a 16-page tabloid format. The company's shareholders, however, did not receive a copy of the new, condensed version.

The AMAX promotion is the first summary report to be published in the *WSJ*, and possibly the first in any publication, according to Fred Sibley, marketing director of special events for the *WSJ*. Publishing the financial information, he says, is a unique marketing tool to reach potential investors. "I think it suddenly takes the summary annual report out of the closet and gives it a viability it never had before," says Sibley. "Here at the *Journal* we look at it as another option for companies that want to enhance their image. You can't reach four to six million people and not expect something to happen."



The front page of AMAX's insert in The Wall Street Journal *was designed to attract the attention of the financial community.*

Kicks off campaign

AMAX's summary report insert is the first phase of a 12-month advertising/promotional campaign developed to dramatize its successful restructuring. "The campaign is intended to get the word out that we're a new AMAX," Badler emphasizes. The company reported a profit of $740 million in 1988, after suffering losses totaling $1.7 billion over a four-year period beginning in 1982.

The summary report—a more readable, condensed annual report format with bold headlines and dramatic charts—promotion was the company's way of kicking off its $1 million campaign with a big impact. "As companies restructure, many tend to lose their identities," comments Richard A. Lewis, chairman of Corporate Annual Reports Inc., the firm that designed the report. "To get the public's attention and establish a new identity, they have to do something really striking. Otherwise, they will remain invisible."

Continued on page 16

Europe 1992: a threat to mid-sized firms?

Tight budgets will make competition tough for this sector, asserts H&K executive

The unification of the European Community in 1992 will place a greater economic strain on European public relations firms—especially mid-sized ones, which do not have as many resources as large firms to invest on client services to compete in the new marketplace, contends Claudio Belli, president of Hill and Knowlton International.

To compete effectively and retain their clients in this new environment, all public relations firms will have to improve the quality and range of their services, Belli said, speaking at the spring meeting of the PRSA Counselors Academy. The traditional European emphasis on consumer publicity and crisis communications will no longer be enough, he says.

Instead, it will be replaced by a more sophisticated—and more costly—brand of

public relations. To succeed, firms will need to offer sophisticated counseling services and expertise in a variety of specialties, and will need to build and maintain strong connections throughout Europe, he stresses.

"Mid-sized firms won't have the muscle to compete because of limits on their expense structure," Belli asserted. "They will be unable to finance expansion to develop specialized strengths in growth areas."

Presently, he says, the largest public relations firms in Europe—Saatchi, Burson-Marsteller, Shandwick, and Hill and Knowlton—control less than one percent of the market. "Not one of them enjoys anything like market preeminence," Belli says. "The market is fragmented and widely dispersed." The United Kingdom, for example, has the largest public relations market in the EC, with billings of $400 million. But, there are 200 firms in London alone, and the biggest firm there has billings of approximately $25 million.

Specialization is key

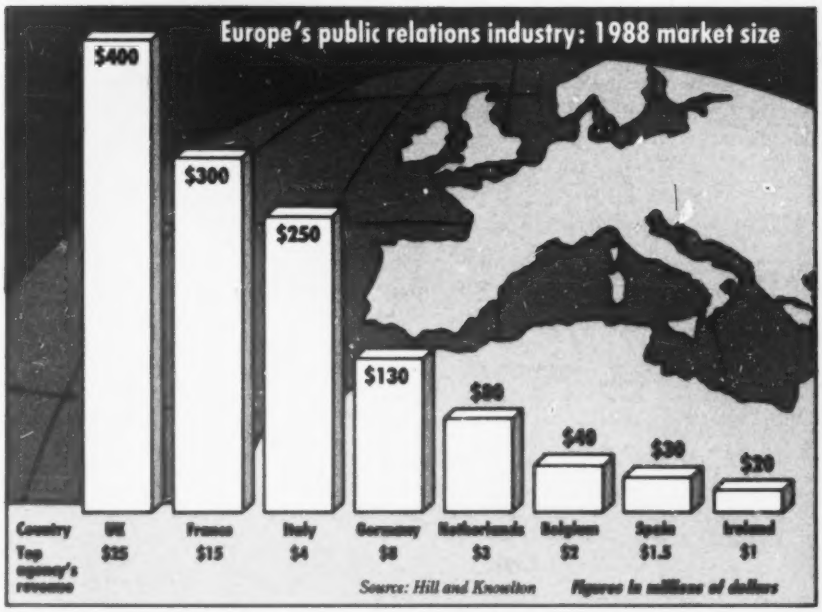
Belli predicts that medium-sized firms will be "in trouble" because they lack the financial resources and specialization needed to serve the new, complex needs of clients. "They will fall short on client service because most lack the pan-European or global connections that the new ball game requires," he contends. A survey of clients of England's public relations firms, conducted last year by Business Marketing Service LTD, found that the primary reason companies sought a new or additional public relations firm was "the need for specialist skills."

The plan, which calls for the 12 member countries to remove all trade barriers through the adoption of 300 directives establishing common business standards, means that European companies are faced with the challenge of positioning themselves for national, pan-European and global markets.

Growth will continue

"The unification will mean tremendous opportunity for growth and expansion in strategic public relations," Belli says. "Increasingly, public relations is seen as an essential element in the management of change."

Since 1986, European firms have been growing at a rate of 20 to 25 percent, and Belli expects the industry to experience further growth of between 25 and 35 percent over the next three years. He predicts that by 1991 the public relations industry in Europe will grow three-fold, to nearly $3 billion. (The United States spends about $9.5 billion a year on public relations, nearly 10 times greater than is spent in all of Europe.)



Today, more than $1 billion is spent on public relations by the European Community, which includes some 320 million customers. However, the market is fragmented; the largest public relations agencies in Europe control less than one percent of it. By 1991, the industry is expected to triple in size, to $3 billion.

One reason for this healthy expansion, he says, is that many European companies are reducing their in-house public relations departments in favor of outside firms. But despite this expected growth, it is still very difficult to predict what specific areas will grow or the structure of firms which will prosper in the future, Belli points out.

Emphasis on training

However, one significant effect of this growing emphasis on experienced, quality counsel will be a major push to improve personnel at public relations firms, which will mean increased spending on training and development, Belli notes. In addition, he says, many firms will be recruiting specialists from fields other than public relations to improve the quality of management ranks. "We will be jump-starting our business with an infusion of senior counselors from the outside," he adds.

Only firms with the financial resources to upgrade their services will survive, he maintains. "Providing better service to the customer means investing in quality, and adding to overhead," he says.

Strategic alliances

Another result of the increased demands that will be placed on public relations firms overseas is an expected increase in acquisitions, mergers and strategic alliances, Belli reports. Shandwick, for example, has acquired four European public relations firms in the last 12 months. Many firms will most likely seek to join forces with research and survey firms, marketing services, financial specialists, communications technology companies and government affairs specialists to get a leg up on the competition.

But most EC public relations executives, Belli says, are aware that simply getting bigger is not the solution to all their problems. Instead, he stresses, "size must also add strength," As a result, the foremost acquisition criterion has become, "What market niche, and what specialization will this combination add to my business portfolio."

Belli emphasizes that the massive financial and human resources of Europe's largest public relations firms should enable them to adjust more easily to the changing market. He also paints a bright future for smaller, "niche" firms that specialize in services that are in demand. "Very focused 'boutique' public relations firms will probably survive and may even prosper," he predicts. □

Illustration by Tom Lynn

Educators rank public relations programs

University of Maryland is most frequently cited as best undergrad school

The University of Maryland is most frequently cited as having the best undergraduate curriculum in public relations, according to a recent, informal survey of public relations educators conducted by the Department of Advertising/Public Relations at Marquette University, Milwaukee. This may be the first time the nation's top collegiate public relations programs have been ranked in this fashion, according to Bill L. Baxter, APR, associate professor and chairman of the department, who devised and conducted the survey.

Top college public relations programs

1. **University of Maryland**
2. **San Diego State**
3. **University of Florida**
4. **San Jose State**
5. **Boston University**
6. **Ball State**
7. **Syracuse University**
8. **California State (Fullerton)**
8. **Ohio State**
8. **University of Southern California**
8. **University of Wisconsin (Madison)**

Source: Department of Advertising/Public Relations, Marquette University.

The colleges listed above were most frequently cited in an informal survey of public relations educators as having the best undergraduate programs.

"I did the survey to find out in an informal, conversational manner what my colleagues think are the best programs," Baxter explains. "Often, students will ask, 'What are the good programs? Where do you stack up?' This is the closest we've ever come to a ranking of the sequence."

Surveys were sent to 114 educators who are members of the Public Relations

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Society of America and the International Association of Business Communicators; 70 (61 percent) responded. A total of 28 institutions were ranked according to the total number of times they were mentioned in response to the following question: Besides your program, which two public relations programs would you recommend to a student as the best in the country for undergraduate work in public relations?

Maryland topped the list with 22 responses, followed by San Diego State (15), University of Florida (10), San Jose State (10), Boston University (8), Ball State (7) and Syracuse University (5). Four colleges tied for eighth place, with four mentions each: California State (Fullerton), Ohio State, University of Southern California and the University of Wisconsin (Madison).

"Top colleges—not flukes"

Although the survey was not conducted scientifically, Baxter asserts that the rankings nevertheless depict a fairly accurate portrait of the top public relations curricula. "The top schools cited are not flukes," he contends. "There are good reasons why they've been recognized. They're doing things that are visible. You associate these schools with innovation."

Baxter says he's aware that some universities may question the validity of the sampling; however, he points out that respondents included seven former chairmen of the PRSA Educators Section, seven winners of the society's annual Outstanding Educator Award and authors of four of the field's leading textbooks.

"Passion for excellence"

When evaluating programs, Baxter maintains, public relations educators normally focus on three primary areas: writing, theoretical training and hands-on experience/internships. Most of the schools singled out excelled in each area to a certain degree, he says.

One respondent cited Maryland and San Jose State's "passion for excellence" as one attribute that warranted their top rankings. Respondents cited Maryland, along with other top programs, for their quality of instruction, balance of theoretical and practical training, large number of course offerings and impressive faculties.

Twenty (71 percent) of the outstanding public relations programs mentioned are part of journalism/mass communications units accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. □

Releasing balloons now a publicity bust

Environmental concerns, lawsuits deflate launches

Colorful helium balloons have long been a popular publicity tool. Disneyland alone releases more than one million balloons every year. And what would a political convention be without balloons? However, outdoor balloon releases are starting to attract the wrong kind of attention.

In 1985, environmentalists discovered that endangered species such as sperm whales and sea turtles were mistaking balloons that land on the water for jellyfish, and eating them. The balloons clog the animals' digestive tracts, and they slowly starve to death. Environmental groups have launched a public relations campaign to abolish outdoor releases.

"Our primary tactic is education," says Peter Hibbard, co-director of the Balloon Alert Project based in Toms River, N.J. "We lecture and we write articles. When we find out about a balloon release, we call the planner and explain our position."

One type of "unlaunch" now being used is tying balloons together to form an arch.

Photo courtesy of Ball/Ons TOday magazine.

The response to these calls is best summarized by Mitchell Fox, animal issues director of the Progressive Animal Welfare Society (PAWS): "We raise some eyebrows and snickers, but after the initial weirdness wears off, they see that we have a point." In fact, most balloon launches are cancelled with just one call, he claims.

Bob Schoelkopf, director of New Jersey's Marine Mammal Stranding Center, believes that this is because the environmentalists don't try to order the balloon launchers to stop. Instead, he says, "We explain the problem, and offer to work with them to develop alternatives."

Teaching "unlaunching"

The alternatives are called "unlaunches." One suggested unlaunch is to give the balloons away to children attending an event. Susan Hibbard, co-director of the Balloon Alert Project, feels that publicists should prefer this kind of event. "This unlaunch gets you better coverage. Kids walk around the event with a balloon with your name on it, and then they take this 'billboard' into their homes, where it stays for days."

One of the organizations that switched to an unlaunch is Best Foods, makers of Skippy peanut butter and Mazola corn oil. In 1987, the company was planning a simultaneous balloon launch in New York City, Los Angeles and Indianapolis to announce its sponsorship of the 1988 Olympics. Best switched to arches constructed from balloons. At the end of the event, they lowered the arches and gave out pins for everyone to puncture the balloons. They even explained why they weren't launching the balloons.

"We saw no value to sticking to launches," explains Terilyn Finders, manager of communication for Best Foods. "By switching, we avoided controversy and prevented the balloons from becoming the issue the media covered instead of our sponsorship."

At a celebration for cancer survivors, the American Cancer Society had participants tie their balloons together into arches of hope. As the TV cameras rolled, the survivors and their families walked under these arches. Irving Rimer, APR, former vice president of public relations for the society, says the arches were

PRJ's FOURTH ANNUAL

SALARY SURVEY

Photo by Ken Cooper/The Image Bank

Median salary is $39,400; gender gap lives

Median salaries have increased only marginally for the public relations field, and the gender gap is still very much a fact, according to *PRJ*'s recently-completed Fourth Annual Salary Survey.

The self-selecting survey was conducted via a questionnaire inserted in the March 1989 issue of *PRJ*. Because this is not a random survey, a margin of error cannot be calculated.

Compared to the salaries reported by 1,235 respondents to last year's survey, this year's 1,284 respondents show only a 1 percent increase in median salary. Last year's median was $39,100; this year's is $39,413. When respondents were asked how much of a salary increase they have had since a year ago, however (a more valid indicator, since two different groups of respondents are not being compared), the results were somewhat more encouraging: The sample had a 6 percent median salary increase, or 2 percent greater than the Bureau of Labor Statistics' reported cost-of-living increase of just over 4 percent nationwide. One respondent in 20 reported either no raise or a decrease from the previous year.

More than half (54 percent) of this year's respondents were women—a slight increase over last year's percentage (51 percent). The

> **"More than half of survey respondents feel they are not being paid enough"**

SALARIES: MEN AND WOMEN, BY AGE

	median salary	% over 45k	received bonus	size of bonus	% men/ women
under 35 years old					
MEN	$32,624	27%	41%	$3,220	26%
WOMEN	26,629	7	31	1,665	60
35 years and older					
MEN	57,886	75	40	11,496	74
WOMEN	42,220	42	30	9,466	40
ALL RESPONDENTS	39,413	40	35	6,348	—

Sixty percent of female respondents are age 35 and under, but the median salary for males in that category is 22 percent greater. Over 35, the ratios reverse and males' median is 37 percent greater.

median salary for males with less than five years of experience ($29,275) is nearly $5,500 (or 23 percent) greater than that of their female counterparts ($23,778). In most cases, the gap widens as years of experience increase. Males with five to nine years of experience have a median of $40,604, which is $7,900, or 24 percent, greater than the median for females with the same experience ($32,686). Males with 10 to 14 years of experience earn about $10,000 (24 percent) more than females with the same experience ($51,457 is the median for men; $41,308 for women). At 15 to 19 years of experience, the gap narrows somewhat: The median for men is $59,106 compared to $49,535 for women—a difference of $9,571, or 19 percent. Of those with 20 or more years of experience, men out-earn women $68,439 to $53,880—a difference of $14,559, or 27 percent. (See table, page 18.)

When men and women are compared by age, salary disparities are also apparent. Men under 35 years old have a median salary of $32,624, which is nearly $6,000, or 22 percent, greater than that of women in the same age range.

SALARIES: MEN AND WOMEN, BY EXPERIENCE

	median salary	% over 45k	received bonus	size of bonus	% men/ women
1 to 4 years experience					
MEN	$29,275	14%	39%	$1,095	12%
WOMEN	23,778	4	35	490	35
5 to 9 years experience					
MEN	40,604	38	39	2,191	21
WOMEN	32,686	14	25	907	30
10 to 14 years experience					
MEN	51,457	66	44	3,181	21
WOMEN	41,308	36	24	2,276	18
15 to 19 years experience					
MEN	59,106	87	44	9,977	14
WOMEN	49,535	66	42	4,500	10
20-plus years experience					
MEN	68,439	90	42	7,835	30
WOMEN	53,880	72	43	4,987	6
ALL MEN	51,716	43	42	3,250	46
ALL WOMEN	31,993	21	31	1,415	54
ALL RESPONDENTS	39,413	40	35	2,100	—

Each additional five years of experience correlates with about $10,000 more in salary. At entry level, males' median salary is 23 percent greater than females'; at the 20 years-plus experience level, the gap is 27 percent.

> **"Whether compared by years of experience or age, male/female salary gaps exist at every level"**

At age 35 and above, the median for men is $57,886—in this case, $15,666, or 37 percent, greater than the median for women in that age range. (See table, page 18.)

Sixty-five percent of the men who responded to the survey have been in the business for 10 years or more. In contrast, 65 percent of the women have been in the field for fewer than 10 years. It's no surprise then, that almost three-quarters (74 percent) of the males who responded to the study are 35 years of age and older, while 60 percent of the female respondents are under age 35.

Only half satisfied

This year, respondents were asked to comment on whether they're adequately paid for the job they do. More than half (52 percent) said that they felt that they are not being paid enough. Broken down by sex, a total of 58 percent of the women and 44 percent of the men reported dissatisfaction with their salaries.

Asked to indicate one or more reasons why they believe they are underpaid, 41 percent put some blame on their employers. But among the 20 percent of those who indicated that they feel they are not adequately compensated because "public relations does not pay well as a whole," only about one-quarter (27 percent) also indicated that employers are responsible.

Closer examination of respondents who said that they feel they are in a low-paying profession revealed specialty-area demographics roughly parallel to those of the overall survey sample. (See box describing make-up of sample, page 19.) However, this group did tend to be slightly less experienced and had a median salary ($34,663) somewhat lower than that of the overall sample. Less than 25 percent of this subgroup earn more than $45,000. These practitioners are also more likely to be working in a public relations firm than in corporate or other sectors: About 25 percent are in counseling firms, compared with 15 percent for the overall sample.

Experience counts

Each five years of experience correlates to another $10,000 in salary, much as in *PRJ*'s previous survey results. Just under half (49 percent) of respondents with between one and four years of experience earn more than $25,000 a year, while the same percentage of respondents with between five and nine years of experience earn more than $35,000 annually. Just over half (51 percent) of the respondents with between 10 and 14 years of experience earn over $45,000; 46 percent of respondents with between 15 and 19 years under their belts earn more than $55,000. Finally, just over half (52 percent) of the respondents with more than 20 years of experience earn over $65,000 annually.

Best/worst-paying fields

Respondents were permitted to assign only one primary

The survey technique

PRJ's Fourth Annual Salary Survey was conducted using a postage-paid, mail-back questionnaire inserted in the March 1989 issue.

As is common in such self-selecting mail surveys, there is no way of knowing how representative the sample is of the total universe of *PRJ* readers. Therefore, small percentage changes from last year may be due to sample differences rather than to clear establishment of a new trend.

Describing the sample

More than half (54 percent) of the respondents to this year's questionnaire were women, a slightly higher percentage than last year (51 percent). The age breakdowns of this year's respondents also closely mirrored last year's: 9 percent under 25 years old (up about 1 percent from last year); 36 percent between 25 and 34; 29 percent between 35 and 44; 18 percent between 45 and 54 (up 2 percent from last year); and 8 percent over 55 (compared to 11 percent last year). The overall median respondent age is about the same: between 37 and 38 years old.

All the experience levels fall within 1 percent, one way or the other, of last year's results. Four percent of the respondents have been in the profession less than a year; 24 percent have between one and four years of experience; 26 percent have five to nine years in the field; 19 percent have 10 to 14 years; 11 percent have 15 to 19 years; and 16 percent have been around public relations for more than 20 years.

Geographically, the Midwest is the most strongly represented, with 28 percent of respondents reporting in from that region. The Northeast (which includes Canadian respondents) represents 26 percent of the sample; the Southeast, 24 percent, and the West-Southwest (including Texas and the Northwest), 23 percent.

Varied activities

Work in a counseling firm was once again cited as the most common primary activity of a respondent's organization, although it was not mentioned quite as frequently (15 percent this year; 17 percent last year). The figures for each activity are as follows, with last year's figure, where different, appearing in parentheses: industrial/manufacturing, 11 percent; health care, 9 percent; financial/insurance, 7 percent (9 percent); association/foundation, 10 percent (8 percent); government, 7 percent; utility, 5 percent (6 percent); education, 7 percent (6 percent); media, 3 percent; religious/charitable, 3 percent; and other activities, 23 percent (22 percent).

Respondents were allowed to indicate multiple public relations specialties. Media relations was once again the most popular area, with 81 percent (80 percent last year) noting that they at least sometimes work with the press. This year's figures for other specialties (and last year's where different) are as follows: publicity, 72 percent; special events, 72 percent (71 percent); community relations, 58 percent (59 percent); corporate communications, 55 percent (58 percent); marketing, 52 percent (54 percent); public affairs, 45 percent (47 percent); employee relations, 42 percent; advertising, 40 percent (41 percent); issues management, 36 percent (37 percent) and investor relations, once again by far the area least often specified, at 13 percent (14 percent).

"IR and issues management continue to be the

SALARY BY TITLE

	median salary	% over 45k
All respondents (all titles combined)		
Northeast	$43,547	47%
West-Southwest	41,185	43
Midwest	37,486	37
Southeast	36,015	32
ALL RESPONDENTS	39,413	40
Account executives, representatives, associates, assistants		
Northeast	27,225	7
West-Southwest	28,742	9
Midwest	23,840	4
Southeast	22,160	3
Account supervisors, group managers, other managers, other supervisors, vice presidents		
Northeast	52,720	69
West-Southwest	51,139	66
Midwest	48,053	58
Southeast	43,527	46
Other officers (senior counselors, partners, senior vice presidents, executive vice presidents)*		
Northeast	59,008	77
West-Southwest	67,404	62
Midwest	60,935	72
Southeast	50,000	50

*These figures exclude those who wrote in "Other" titles.

Regionally, median salaries for the total sample are slightly higher in the Northeast. But within two title groupings, median salaries in the West-Southwest are higher.

activity to their employer organization. Several primarily corporate activities (industrial/manufacturing, utility, and scientific/technical) prove to be, as in the past, better-paying than "public relations counseling firm." (See table, page 21.)

America's "smokestack" activities still pay the best: almost three out of four (74 percent) respondents from industrial and manufacturing organizations earn more than $45,000 annually. Utilities are also lucrative: 64 percent who work for them earn $45,000 or more. (Men out-earn women in both sectors: Medians for men as compared to women are $69,219 to $39,507 in industry and $55,470 to $42,480 in utilities.) Scientific/technical and solo practitioners each have slightly over half of the respondents reporting salaries above $45,000. No other type of organizational activity had more than half of its representatives earning $45,000+.

Just below utilities are those in scientific/technical (median: $45,833), solo practitioners ($45,825), media/communications ($43,027), counseling firms ($41,691), and financial/insurance ($40,853).

On the low end are: association/foundation ($37,322), education ($36,512), government ($35,988), health care ($33,711), transportation/hotels, ($33,140), religious/charitable ($32,509) and those who work for ad agencies ($30,328).

Even in the lower-paying organizational areas, men prevail salary-wise. Males in government, for example, earn median salaries of $44,063; females, $32,342.

Specialties: What pays?

While respondents were limited to giving one primary activity for their employer organizations, they were invited to list as many personal public relations specialties as they liked. The average number listed was six.

Investor relations and issues management continue to be the highest-paying public relations specialties, with practitioners in these two areas commanding median salaries of $51,983 and $48,706, respectively. (See table, page 21.) Sixty-three percent of the IR specialists earn more than $45,000 annually (median for men is $65,986; for women, $34,735). Fifty-seven percent of issues management specialists earn more than $45,000 (median for men is $57,551; for women, $39,836).

Public affairs practitioners (median salary of $44,293; 48 percent over $45,000) and corporate communications specialists (median $44,140; 49 percent over $45,000) are also at the high end. Generalists ($42,778; 46 percent over $45,000) and employee relations specialists ($41,183; 43 percent over $45,000) also earn more than the median salary for the total sample.

Lower-paying specialties continue to be media relations ($39,056), special events ($38,299), and publicity ($37,623).

Sizing it up

The relative size of the employer's public relations staff is also relevant to salary. Two-thirds of the respondents in firms or departments with 25 or more public relations practitioners earn more than $45,000 (last year's figure was 64 percent), compared with 57 percent in firms or departments with 10 to 24 professionals (same figure as last year). Of those in firms with five to nine professionals, 57 percent earn $45,000 or better (higher than last year's 47 percent). In the smaller firms or departments, though, where 61 percent of the sample works, lower pay is the norm: just one-third (as compared to 30 percent last year) in environments with between one and four professionals report annual salaries of more than $45,000.

In public relations counseling firms, the bigger the billings,

highest-paying specialties

the bigger the salary. The median salary of a practitioner working at an agency with billings under $100,000 annually is $31,236. At agencies where the billings are between $100,000 and $500,000, the median is $40,037. Agencies billing between $500,000 and $1 million offer median salaries of $44,179, while those billing over $1 million each year pay median salaries of $47,105.

A title on the door

Within departments or firms, regardless of size, titular status offers a mixed bag. (See table, page 20.) The median salary level for vice presidents is up slightly over that reported by last year's respondents, with the VPs in counseling firms still lagging about 25 percent behind their counterparts in other organizations ($52,936 vs. $70,561).

Corporations and other institutions traditionally have been more reluctant than firms to bestow vice presidential titles, and salaries may reflect this rarity, to some degree. Male VPs in counseling firms earn median salaries of $53,203; female VPs earn $48,333. In other organizations males earn $72,282, and females, $66,000.

Assistants ($28,132 median annual salary) and associates/representatives ($32,578 median annual salary) in corporations and other organizations earn more than account executives and junior AEs ($22,126 median annual salary) in counseling firms. Supervisor/managers out-earn senior AEs $43,869 to $38,614.

Where it's at

Geographically, the Northeast (including Canada) continues to be the best-paying place to work. Forty-seven percent of practitioners there earn more than $45,000 (68 percent of the males; 28 percent of the females), compared with 43 percent above that figure in the Southwest-West (including Texas and the Northwestern states).

Meanwhile, only 37 percent of respondents in the Midwest and 32 percent of respondents in the Southeast are earning more than $45,000 a year. It also pays to work in an urban environment: 43 percent of the urban public relations work force earn over $45,000, compared to 34 percent of those working in suburban and rural environments. (Seven out of 10 respondents report they work in cities).

Bonus babies

A smaller proportion (35 percent) of respondents than in 1988's survey group (40 percent) reported receiving a bonus during the previous year. Just over four out of 10 males (42 percent), as compared to slightly more than three out of 10 females (31 percent), said they received a bonus. The median bonus for males was $3,250; for females, $1,415. Younger respondents (under 35 years old) were, however, just as likely to receive a bonus as those 35 and above.

Affiliation and accreditation

Forty-two percent of PRSA members earn over $45,000, compared to 27 percent of nonmembers. In addition, 70 percent of accredited *PRJ* readers earn over $45,000, compared with 44 percent of other respondents who have the required accreditation minimum of five years of experience. The median for accredited readers is $53,454; for the rest of those practitioners who would be eligible, it's $42,738. □

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PRIMARY ACTIVITY OF RESPONDENT'S ORGANIZATION

	median salary	% over 45k
Industrial/manufacturing	$58,407	74%
Utility	51,081	64
Scientific/technical	45,833	52
Solo practitioner	45,825	53
Media/communications	43,027	47
Public relations counseling firm	41,691	45
Financial/insurance	40,853	41
Association/foundation	37,322	34
Education	36,512	28
Government	35,988	34
Healthcare	33,711	26
Transportation/hotels/resorts/ entertainment	33,140	27
Religious/charitable organization	32,509	16
Advertising agency	30,328	22
All other	34,393	28
ALL RESPONDENTS	39,413	40

Only those in the industrial and utilities sectors show median salaries of $50,000+. Medians for those in ad agencies, charitable, travel and health care are under $35,000.

AREA OF PUBLIC RELATIONS*

	median salary	% over 45k
Investor relations	$51,983	63%
Issues management	48,706	57
Public affairs	44,293	48
Corporate communications	44,140	49
Generalist	42,778	46
Employee relations	41,183	43
Marketing	39,000	39
Community relations	39,181	40
Media relations	39,056	39
Special events	38,299	37
Publicity	37,623	37
Advertising	37,414	37
All Other	40,430	43
ALL RESPONDENTS	39,413	40

*Multiple responses permitted

By speciality, IR and issues management lead the pack. Excluding these two, there is only a $7,000 difference between the lowest median by specialty and the highest.